

# SOUTHWEST COLORADO: BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES

July 15 – 25, 2009

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*Though seldom visited by birding groups, Southwestern Colorado offers some of the most varied and breathtaking scenery in the country along with an outstandingly diverse flora and fauna, making it a virtual playground for any student of natural history. In July, birds are surprisingly visible as they care for their noisy young and, in particular, this tour offers an excellent opportunity to see two recent “splits,” the Gunnison Sage-Grouse and the Dusky Grouse. Butterflies are also abundant in wildflower-carpeted mountain meadows, snowmelt seeps, and waterways through arid canyons. Starting and ending in Denver, this tour will sample alpine tundra at Mount Evans, lush montane forest at Grand Mesa, arid canyons at Mesa Verde, and deep gorges at Black Canyon.*

*On this tour, we’ll make an effort to see the region’s specialties including such birds as Chuckar, White-tailed Ptarmigan, Gunnison Sage-Grouse, Dusky Grouse, Black Swift, Calliope Hummingbird, Lewis’s Woodpecker, Williamson’s Sapsucker, American Three-toed Woodpecker, Pinyon Jay, American Dipper, “Slate-colored” Fox Sparrow, Pine Grosbeak, and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch. Butterfly highlights may include Rocky Mountain Parnassian, Baird’s Swallowtail, Becker’s White, Mead’s and Scudder’s sulphurs, Tailed and Lustrous coppers, Colorado and Bramble hairstreaks, Mormon Metalmark, up to ten or more species of fritillaries, Rockslide Checkerspot, Weidemeyer’s Admiral, and Magdalena and Colorado alpins. Along the way, mammals will also be conspicuous and we should see American pika, three species of prairie dogs, Abert’s squirrel, elk, pronghorn, mountain goat, and bighorn sheep.*

**July 15, Day 1: Arrivals in Denver.** Tour participants should plan to arrive in Denver no later than 5:00 p.m. Upon arrival, please take the hotel’s courtesy shuttle to the hotel. The tour begins at 6:00 p.m. in the lobby of the hotel where we will have a short introductory meeting followed by dinner.

NIGHT: Courtyard Denver Airport, Denver

**July 16, Day 2: Apex Park and Loveland Pass.** We’ll begin with a morning at Apex Park, one of the most productive butterflying spots in the area, where we hope to see such gems as Two-tailed Swallowtail, Bramble Hairstreak, and Wiedemeyer’s Admiral. The park is also rich in birdlife and we’ll look for such typical western species as Cordilleran Flycatcher, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Lesser Goldfinch. After lunch we’ll continue to the alpine tundra at Loveland Pass where Magdalena Alpine, Rockslide Checkerspot, and Grizzled Skipper can be found amid the alpine wildflowers and lichen-covered rocks. Although the tundra here is not extensive, White-tailed Ptarmigan and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch are always possible above treeline, and we should see our first White-crowned Sparrow.

NIGHT: Comfort Suites, Dillon

**July 17, Day 3: Eagle’s Nest Wilderness Area and South Park.** We’ll spend the morning exploring the montane forests of Eagle’s Nest Wilderness area where we should see mountain specialties such as Broad-tailed,

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Rufous, and possibly Calliope hummingbirds; Red-naped Sapsucker; Gray Jay; Pine Grosbeak; Red Crossbill; and Cassin's Finch. We'll also search the nearby meadows for Queen Alexandra's Sulphur, Purplish Copper, and Boissduval's Blue. As we head south through the immense high-elevation grassland of South Park, we'll look for prairie species such as Swainson's and Ferruginous hawks, and Mountain Bluebird.

NIGHT: Inn of the Rio Grande, Alamosa

**July 18, Day 4: Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge to Durango.** This morning we'll visit Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, an oasis in the arid landscape where we'll look for waterbirds such as Eared Grebe, White-faced Ibis, American Bittern, Redhead, American Avocet, and Wilson's Phalarope. Depending on water levels, a few migrant shorebirds may also be present. Butterflies are also numerous here and we should see Bronze and Ruddy coppers and Garita Skipperling. Driving west through the San Juan Mountains to the Continental Divide at Wolf Creek Pass, we'll stop to search for American Dipper along the headwaters of the Rio Grande and have some fun with fritillary identification as we try to sort out such beauties as Atlantis and Purplish fritillaries. We'll continue to the attractive town of Durango, widely known for its restored Victorian landmarks and historic narrow-gauge railroad.

NIGHT: Comfort Inn & Suites, Durango

**July 19, Day 5: La Plata Mountains and Mesa Verde.** We'll spend this morning exploring the ponderosa pine forests of the La Plata Mountains near Junction Creek Campground. Forest clearings in and around the campground are often full of butterflies including Blue Copper, Colorado Hairstreak, Spalding's Blue, Nais Metalmark, and Great Spangled Fritillary. We should also find a variety of birds including Williamson's Sapsucker, Plumbeous Vireo, Townsend's Solitaire, and Grace's Warbler. In the afternoon we'll visit Mesa Verde National Park in the high plateau country of Colorado's southwest corner. Mesa Verde is best known for its fascinating Ancestral Puebloan mesa-top and cliff dwellings, abandoned abruptly and for unknown reasons in the late 13th century. As we view these remarkable dwellings, we'll watch the sky for Golden Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. We'll also explore the park's pinyon-juniper habitat, home to such birds as Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Wildfires swept through Mesa Verde in July 2000, making dramatic changes in the landscape but sparing most of the dwellings, so we'll get a firsthand look at this habitat's regeneration.

NIGHT: Comfort Inn & Suites, Durango

**July 20, Day 6: San Juan National Forest and Ouray.** This morning we'll take what is arguably the most spectacular drive in all of Colorado as we head north from Durango through the San Juan National Forest. We'll stop at Haviland and Andrews Lakes in search of montane birds such as Dusky Grouse; Hammond's and Dusky flycatchers; Western Bluebird and Virginia's Warbler; and butterflies such as Sylvan, Banded, and Hedgerow hairstreaks; Greenish Blue; and Green and Oreas commas. After lunch we'll travel north to the old mining town of Ouray. This little tourist town is best known in the birding world as home to a colony of Black Swifts that nest at Box Canyon Falls. We'll take a short hike to see this spectacular, almost subterranean waterfall and get close-up views of swifts on the nest. We'll also watch the stream below for resident American Dippers and check the oaks for Colorado Hairstreak.

NIGHT: Best Western Sundance, Delta

**July 21, Day 7: Escalante Canyon and Grand Mesa.** Adding yet another habitat to our list, this morning we'll visit Escalante Canyon, an arid rocky canyon with riparian woodlands along Escalante Creek. This interesting area holds a wide variety of birds including Chukar, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Say's Phoebe, Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Rock Wren and Lark and Black-throated sparrows. Butterflying is also productive here and we'll search for Becker's White, Juniper and Great Purple hairstreaks, and the rare Yuma Skipper. We'll spend the remainder of the day enjoying the beautiful high-elevation spruce-fir forest and wildflower meadows of the Grand Mesa. Butterflies are often abundant here and could include Purplish Copper; Zerene, Mormon, and Sil-

ver-bordered fritillaries; and Milbert's Tortoiseshell. Some of the birds we may see are Band-tailed Pigeon, Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Fox Sparrow, Pine Grosbeak and Red Crossbill.

NIGHT: Best Western Sundance, Delta

**July 22, Day 8: Delta to Gunnison.** Our first stop this morning will be Escalante State Wildlife Area outside Delta. This riparian woodland along the Gunnison River is home to Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Lewis's Woodpecker, Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Chat, and both Indigo and Lazuli buntings. We'll also visit Fruitgrower's Reservoir which often holds breeding Western and Clark's grebes, and sometimes migrant shorebirds. We'll spend the afternoon at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, one of the deepest canyons in the world and a spectacular place. The canyon should be full of White-throated Swifts playing on the updrafts and we'll also keep our eyes open for Dusky Grouse, Dusky Flycatcher, Canyon Wren, and Green-tailed and Spotted towhees. Butterflying is often excellent along the roadsides here and we'll look for Mustard White, Tailed Copper, Edward's and Callipe fritillaries, Common Branded Skipper, and Woodland Skipper.

NIGHT: Holiday Inn Express, Gunnison

**July 23, Day 9: Gunnison to Frisco.** We'll spend the early part of this morning in search of Gunnison Sage-Grouse as well as other sagebrush specialists such as Sage Thrasher and Brewer's Sparrow. Our afternoon plan will be somewhat flexible, depending on what species we are still seeking. Most likely, we'll visit Monarch Pass and Boreas Pass in search of montane specialties such as Three-toed Woodpecker, Olive-sided Flycatcher, "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow, and a wide variety of butterflies.

NIGHT: Comfort Suites, Dillon

**July 24, Day 10: Mount Evans.** Our final day in the field will be spent at Mount Evans, the highest altitude that can be reached by paved road in North America. White-tailed Ptarmigan, American Pipit, and Brown-capped Rosy-Finch can be found here on the open tundra and we'll search diligently for them. Mountain goats, bighorn sheep, and elk also spend their summer days at these higher elevations, and smaller mammals such as yellow-bellied marmot and American pika may come out to bask in the sun. Butterflying is always interesting in the alpine tundra where a number of species are biennial. We'll look especially for Phoebus Parnassian, Mead's and Scudder's sulphurs, Hoary Comma, Colorado Alpine, Chryxus and Melissa arctics, and Draco Skipper.

NIGHT: Courtyard Denver Airport, Denver

**July 25, Day 11: Departures from Denver.** Participants may arrange their departures any time today.

**TOUR LEADERS:** Michael O'Brien and Louise Zemaitis

**Michael O'Brien** is a freelance artist, author, and environmental consultant living in Cape May, New Jersey. He has traveled extensively throughout North and Central America and has a passionate interest in migration, bird vocalizations, and field identification. At home in Cape May, Michael serves as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory for whom he conducts numerous workshops, writes a monthly ID column and photo quiz (see [www.birdcapemay.org](http://www.birdcapemay.org)), and, for many years, conducted a fall songbird migration count. He is co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, *Flight Calls of Migratory Birds*, and *America's 100 Most Wanted Birds*. His illustrations have been widely published in books and field guides, including the *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* and the new *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America*. Michael also has an intense interest in butterflies and leads several "Birds & Butterflies" tours with his wife, Louise Zemaitis.

**Louise Zemaitis** is an artist and naturalist living in Cape May, New Jersey. She is a popular field trip leader in Cape May where she leads bird and butterfly walks and teaches birding workshops as an Associate Naturalist with Cape May Bird Observatory. Louise is also coordinator of the Monarch Monitoring Project in Cape May

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and curator of the Cape May Bird Observatory Art Gallery. An honors graduate at Temple University's Tyler School of Art, she enjoys working as a freelance artist and her illustrations have been widely published.

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour will be limited to 14 participants.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour is **\$2995** per person in double occupancy from Denver. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to dinner on Day 10, lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Denver and return, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature.

The single supplement for this tour is **\$700**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

**TOUR REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$300** per person. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: If cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less **\$150** per person is refundable. If cancellation is made between 120 and 90 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 90 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$150.
Between 120 and 90 days before departure	No refund of the deposit, but any payments on the balance will be refunded.
Fewer than 90 days before departure date	No refund available.

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE:** Application forms for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements to Fort Lauderdale from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements.

**COLORADO HABITAT STAMP REQUIREMENT:** The state of Colorado recently implemented a conservation program which requires individuals between the ages of 18 and 65 to obtain and be prepared to present a Colorado Habitat Stamp in order to enter designated state wildlife areas and state trust lands. **IMPORTANT:** Since we will visit several of these areas, each tour participant within this age group must acquire this stamp prior to and carry it during the tour. Since these stamps will not be available for purchase upon entry at state wildlife areas and state trust lands, not having one would result in significant inconvenience for the group. These are available for purchase from the Colorado Division of Wildlife by phone (800-244-5613), via their website (<http://wildlife.state.co.us/ShopDOW/AppsAndLicenses/HabitatStamp/>) or at certain hunting and fishing stores. As of October 2008, the cost is \$10.25 per person.

**BAGGAGE:** As space in the vehicles is limited, please restrict your baggage to one-medium sized piece of luggage and a carry-on bag.

**LAUNDRY:** Coin operated laundry machines are available at several of our hotels.

**CLIMATE:** Due to significant changes in elevation on this tour, we may encounter a wide range of temperatures. At higher elevations, mornings are usually chilly (often in the low 40s) with mid-day temperatures in the 50s or 60s. At lower elevations or level terrain, pleasant mornings in the 50s or 60s may give way to afternoon highs in the 80s (exceptionally the 90s). Although prolonged periods of rain are unlikely, brief afternoon thunderstorms are always a possibility.

**CLOTHING:** We suggest moderate weight field clothing including a warm jacket, light gloves, and lightweight rain gear. We also strongly suggest bringing layers such as a medium-weight sweater or fleece. You should bring a comfortable pair of walking shoes or hiking boots and a second pair of light shoes. Dress will be casual throughout.

**EQUIPMENT:** You should pack a pair of binoculars that are in good repair, along with a belt pack or day-pack (good for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medications, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag (check for current airline security carry-on restrictions; see [www.tsa.gov/travelers](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers) for more information). Your leader will have a spotting scope, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so. Other items should include an alarm clock, as well as a good flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries.

**HEALTH:** Bring plenty of sunscreen, preferably at least SPF 15. This is important, as the sun is particularly intense at the highest elevations where we will be spending considerable time. Although our activities at the higher elevations will be extremely limited, those who suffer from high blood pressure, chronic bronchitis, a known heart condition, or any other cardiovascular disorder should consult their physician before registering for this tour. If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

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**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website at [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com) offers an affiliated online store which carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com).

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**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to give them a tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. and/or their Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. They can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. When this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on October 27, 2008 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation may provide transportation within the United States.